

New species and amendments to the avifauna of Cameroon

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During field work in Cameroon since 1997 we have confirmed the presence of two species not accepted for the country by Louette (1981) nor by Dowsett (1993) and found nine species completely new for the country's list. At the same time, examination of the literature has revealed a number of species hitherto overlooked, as well as a few misidentifications. Co-ordinates are given for localities not detailed by Louette (1981). (PM) denotes a Palearctic migrant.

COMMON BUZZARD *Buteo buteo*

(PM) While an earlier record was not accepted by Louette (1981), the species has since been identified on Mt Oku, 31 October to 3 November 1988 by Holyoak & Seddon (1990), and we saw an example on 16 February 1998.

[AUGUR BUZZARD *Buteo augur*

Sørensen *et al.* (1996) have claimed a sighting of a female of this species north of the Bénoué National Park. As mentioned by those authors, this is very far from the known range of this eastern African species, and the record is difficult to accept in the absence of any evidence.]

AYRES'S HAWK EAGLE *Hieraaetus ayresii*

A pair of adults and a juvenile were well seen 22 and 24 April 1997, at Boulou swamp in Lobéké (2°10'N, 15°43'E). They were circling and then perching on the edge of the swamp (probably attracted by the large numbers of Grey Parrots *Psittacus erithacus* and Green Pigeons *Treron australis* coming to the salt-pan). A pair was again seen in the area in April 1999, circling together with a pair of Cassin's Hawk Eagles *Spizaetus africanus* (a species whose noisy aerial display makes it far more noticeable). These are the first acceptable records of this species for the country: Louette (1981) mentioned that he had been unable to trace the various specimens mentioned in the literature for Cameroon, and so he preferred to consider them unproven. We have received details of subsequent sightings from Buffle Noir in the Bénoué National Park (8°7'N, 13°50'E) (N. Borrow *in litt.*) and several in western Cameroon (Clark 1999; R. Demey and M. Languy, pers. comm.).

LESSER KESTREL *Falco naumanni*

(PM) Although Dowsett (1993) accepted this species on the Cameroon list on the basis of a bird reportedly seen on 7 September 1985 at Ngaoundéré (Wilson 1989), we do not now believe that record (on an exceptionally early date) to be correct. The majority of the range extensions reported by that author have regrettably been found

to be erroneous, for example six forest species claimed from Mt Oku but not found by subsequent ornithologists (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1998b). These were doubtless the result of misidentifications (see also *Hirundo albigularis*, below), but there are acceptable records of this kestrel by Thiollay (1978), Scholte *et al.* (1999), and others.

COMMON QUAIL *Coturnix coturnix*

(PM) A specimen was collected on Mt Manenguba, 25 March 1948 (Serle 1950). There have subsequently been sight records from Waza, 25 March 1993 and 7 February 1995 (Scholte *et al.* 1999).

SPOTTED CRAKE *Porzana porzana*

(PM) On 22 November 1997 one was seen well, if briefly, in thicket on the edge of a small marsh near the Sanaga river bridge, between Yaoundé and Bafia (4°23'N, 11°15'E) (RJD, J. DeMarco).

[RED-CRESTED TURACO *Tauraco erythrophylus*

Accepted by Dowsett (1993) on the basis of a sight record from the south coast at Kribi (A. Forbes-Watson, in Fry *et al.* 1988). However, this species has not been found in recent investigations in southern Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea (various observers), and was rejected for Gabon (P. Christy in Dowsett 1993), so we think it best treated as unproven at present.]

BARRED OWLET *Glaucidium capense*

First discovered in Lobéké reserve, in the south-east, in April 1997. Five were calling along a distance of 2 km in open-canopy semi-evergreen forest near Lobéké stream (2°17'N, 15°40'E), with another heard off the road in the same habitat near Boulou camp (2°09'N, 15°44'E). Densities were checked with playback experiments, as the species responds very well to tape-recordings. Subsequently, in December-January 1997-98, we found the species common in tall *Triplochiton* forest on the edge of Mala swamp in Nki reserve (2°12'N, 14°39'E) and more local in Boumba-Bek reserve (2°33'N, 15°07'E).

The species was only recently discovered in central Africa, in 1994 in Central African Republic and 1996 in northern Congo-Brazzaville (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1998a, Dowsett *et al.* 1999); the race of this population has not been determined but is likely to be *castaneum*, known from further east in E. Congo-Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of Congo, ex-Zaïre). A forest population is also known further west in Ivory Coast (*etcheopari*).

?PRIGOGINE'S NIGHTJAR *Caprimulgus "prigoginei"*

A nightjar singing in fairly dense forest at 2100 h, 1.2 km east of Boulou camp (Lobéké), 21 April 1997, was producing the long series of "tchoc-tchoc-tchoc-tchoc..." notes, also tape-recorded at Ndoki in nearby Congo-Brazzaville (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1998a) and in the Itombwe Forest, E. Congo-Kinshasa (ex-Zaïre),

by T. Butynski in 1996 (sonograms clearly show all of these recordings to belong to the same species). Playback of the Itombwe tape provoked a vocal reaction (louder song and short calls "rek, rek", also heard at Ndoki). It was not found again in April 1999. Also heard in forest in Nki (Mala) and Kupandaka (2°12'N, 14°51'E) in December-January 1997-98. It is either an undescribed species, or more likely Prigogine's Nightjar, the third forest species in Africa, known from only one specimen from the Itombwe in E. Congo-Kinshasa (ex-Zaire) (Louette 1990), given that T. Butynski's tape, identical to ours, comes from the Itombwe locality.

SCARCE SWIFT *Schoutedenapus myoptilus*

We saw and heard this species on several occasions in the crater of Mt Manenguba on 7 and 8 February 1999, including a flock of some 50. The birds were feeding over forest around the south and east rims of the crater, at an altitude of 1,900-2,200 m. A tape-recording was made. The species is very noisy and indeed the best way of locating it is its characteristic call, a series of clicks, short trills and high-pitched, nasal twittering (a description and sonogram are presented by Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire 1978).

Its discovery in Cameroon was not unexpected, as this widespread montane swift was already known on the western side of Africa from the highlands of Angola and Bioko (Fry *et al.* 1988). They could occur elsewhere along the Cameroon chain of mountains, especially on Mt Cameroon. Some reports of Bates's Swift *Apus batesi* by Stuart (1986) and colleagues over Mt Cameroon and Manenguba may have resulted from confusion with Scarce Swift (S. Stuart, *in litt.* 1999) and, indeed, the remark by M. Gartshore (*in litt.* 1999) that those black swifts were "very noisy" suggests Scarce rather than Bates's, normally a silent species, whose voice has still not been tape-recorded (C. Chappuis, pers. comm.). On the other hand, Scarce Swifts are probably absent from the lower montane forests of the Kupe-Bakossi area, as we failed to find them in some three months of field work there recently.

ALPINE SWIFT *Apus melba*

(PM?) Dowsett (1993) overlooked a reported sighting from Mt Cameroon, 17 January 1984 (Stuart 1986). FDL saw one at Buffle Noir (Bénoué) on 10 March 1999, and published reports include those of Rodewald *et al.* (1994) and Scholte *et al.* (1996).

PALLID SWIFT *Apus pallidus*

(PM?) Dowsett (1993) overlooked a reported sighting from Mt Oku, 28 March and 2 April 1984 (Stuart 1986). There have since been reports from Waza on 8 June 1993 (Scholte *et al.* 1999). The date of June would be surprising for a Palearctic migrant, but it is known to breed in the Sahara, and suspected to do so in Mali (Fry *et al.* 1988).

GOLDEN-TAILED WOODPECKER *Campethera abingoni*

In March 1999 this bird was common in semi-evergreen *Celtis* and *Diospyros* forest along the Bénoué river in the south of Bénoué National Park. It was particularly in

evidence around the Camp of Buffle Noir. It was more local in the north of the park, in dense riparian *Diospyros/Auogeissus* forest. In Faro National Park it is common in the beautiful riparian forest along the river about the Camp des Hippos (8°23'N, 12°49'E), and we also heard it at the Faro crossing in the south (8°12'N, 13°00'E), in dense riparian forest.

Stuart (1986) reported one seen 17 February 1984 at 2,000 m on Mt Manenguba, in montane woodland. This is based on a sighting by C. Bowden (*in litt.* 1999), who feels now, however, that this record requires confirmation. We failed to find the species on Manenguba in 1999.

While it is widespread in *Brachystegia* and other woodland south of the Equator, this species is very patchily distributed to the north, being replaced in Sudanian (= Guinea) woodland by the Fine-spotted Woodpecker *C. punctuligera* (Short in Fry *et al.* 1988). These are sympatric in the Bénoué plain but ecologically separated, with *C. punctuligera* confined to woodland.

[WHITE-THROATED SWALLOW *Hirundo albigularis*

This migrant from southern Africa has been claimed from Kumbo, 20 July 1985, by Wilson (1989). But in view of many misidentifications in that work (see above, under Lesser Kestrel), this species cannot be accepted, and there is no evidence that it ranges north of the Guineo-Congolian forest block.]

GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea*

(PM) One was well seen at a waterfall on the Boumba river, Boumba-Bek reserve (2°41'N, 15°13'E), 28 November 1997 (FDL). It was alongside Mountain Wagtail *M. clara* and African Pied Wagtail *M. aguiunp.*

TAWNY PIPIT *Anthus campestris*

(PM) At Waza, a specimen was collected on 7 February 1974 (van den Elzen 1975). Subsequently, a party of five were reported there 18 October 1994 (Scholte *et al.* 1999).

BLACK-EARED WHEATEAR *Oenanthe hispanica*

(PM) A male was collected at Waza, 10 February 1974 (van den Elzen 1975), and two later sightings in the far north are mentioned by Scholte *et al.* (1999). De Greling (1972) reported seeing a bird with the characters of the race *seebohuni* of the Northern Wheatear *O. oenanthe* at Waza, 30 & 31 March 1966; Black-eared Wheatear, which it resembles, is perhaps more likely.

SAVI'S WARBLER *Locustella luscinioides*

(PM) Fry (1970) reported seeing two birds well in Waza, late November 1969.

UGANDA WOODLAND WARBLER *Phylloscopus budongoensis*

Several singing individuals were located in the tall forest canopy of Lobéké reserve, at c. 450 m especially along streams, in April 1997 and again in 1999. Some were

seen well, attracted into view by the playback of a tape. It was also found commonly in Boumba-Bek and Nki reserves, always above 400 m. This represents a northward extension of the known range of this mid-altitude species, recently discovered in Congo and Gabon (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1996, 1998a), and also in Monte Alen National Park in mainland Equatorial Guinea (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1999).

YELLOW-BREASTED APALIS *Apalis flavida*

In March 1999, in the Bénoué National Park, this warbler was common in semi-evergreen forest and thicket along the Bénoué river. Similarly, in the Faro N.P. it is common from the confluence of the Faro and Déo rivers (8°31'N, 12°43'E), south to the Faro crossing (8°12'N, 13°00'E). Not included by Louette (1981), for the reason given by Dowsett (1993), this species has also been reported from south-western Cameroon (Green 1996) and the Adamaoua Plateau (R. Demey, M. Languy, and other observers, pers. comm.).

BLACK BISHOP *Euplectes gierowii*

The remarkable extension of range occasioned by the discovery of this species at localities in the Ijim area (6°13'N, 10°20'E) will be detailed in full elsewhere (C. Bowden & J. DeMarco *in litt.*). Only two breeding sites are known, the other being on the road from Belo to Bamenda, at about 6°08'N, 10°15'E, where FDL, L.D.C. Fishpool and J. DeMarco saw a male in breeding dress on 28 September 1998. The nearest known population is at Bangui, in Central African Republic (Germain & Cornet 1994), some 800 km to the east.

CHAD FIREFINCH *Lagonosticta (rhodopareia) umbrinodorsalis*

This firefinch is known in Cameroon only from the type locality, Old Sakjé, in the Bénoué N.P. at 8°12'N, 13°46'E (Reichenow 1911). Although Dowsett & Forbes-Watson (1993) treated it as a form of *L. rhodopareia*, following Payne & Louette (1983), they omitted it from the Cameroon list. Payne (1998) now considers *L. umbrinodorsalis* to be specifically distinct.

LOCUST FINCH *Ortygospiza locustella*

One calling and flying over the dambo (seasonally wet grassland) at Boulou (Lobéké reserve) on 23 April 1997 is the first record for the country. We subsequently found it (a group of 4) in short moist grassland in Boumba-Bek "Grande Savane" in December 1997. It was already known from dambos in N. Congo-Brazzaville but not from nearby Central African Republic.

Additional species

In addition to the above, the following species have been reported for the first time since the publication of Dowsett (1993): Kurrichane Buttonquail *Turnix sylvatica* (Christy 1994, Scholte *et al.* 1999); Little Gull *Larus minutus* (PM) (Quantrill &

Quantrill 1995); Kemp's Longbill *Macrosphenus kempii* (Rodewald & Bowden 1995); Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca* (PM), Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* (PM), Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* (PM), Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* (PM?), Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* (PM) and possible Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* (PM) (Sorensen *et al.* 1996); Black-billed Barbet *Lybius guifsobalito* (van Beirs 1997); European Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* (PM), Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber* (PM?), Nubian Bustard *Neotis nuba*, Red-crested Korhaan *Eupodotis ruficrista* and Lesser Black-winged Plover *Vanellus lugubris* (Scholte *et al.* 1999: note that most of the species claimed as new by these authors had already been reported in print from elsewhere); Scaly-fronted Warbler *Spiloptila clamans* (van Beirs 1999).

We accept the proposed splitting of *Terpsiphone rufocinerea* into Rufous-vented Paradise Flycatcher *T. rufocinerea* and Bates's Paradise Flycatcher *T. batesi* (Erard *in* Urban *et al.* 1997): both occur in Cameroon (see Louette, 1981, where treated as a single species).

Dowsett (1993) presented a list of 874 species for Cameroon. With the addition of 35 species documented above (including *Caprimulgus sp. ? prigoginei* and *Terpsiphone batesi*, but excluding *Ficedula albicollis* for the moment), and the deletion of *Tauraco erythrolophus*, the avifauna becomes 908 species.

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